

Sacramento, Calif.,
Sept. 30, 1957

Dear Sweeter,

a course
You have chosen ^afraught with the greatest rewards -- add the greatest perils.

It is a case of the moral dilemma as old as man: individual good and group good. Most of the time we are able to avoid the dilemma. It doesn't thrust itself upon us. But now and again it does, and then we are wracked in a way which is all but unique in this life.

I think I have faced the dilemma squarely. I do not believe I have dodged or rationalized or equivocated. I am committed to the pursuit of the good of a group, which means that the quest is necessarily a long one, and that in the meantime a large number of appealing individual cases must be by-passed. Not trammelled upon. By-passed. I make no apology whatever for this course. I am utterly confident that one day it will bear fruit -- sweet fruit which men can eat in a garden a little closer to Eden.

I would never maintain mine is the proper approach, the best approach for everyone. The world would be a poorer and more miserable place if we did not have within a number of persons impatient with the long haul, and concerned with the palpable, the here-and-now, the isolated datum. But however nice it may be to contemplate the theoretically complementary nature of the two approaches, when you get down to cases, tremendous trouble arises when the two try to work together in the same situation. I am acutely aware of this fact since just this morning I was refused information by a State agency solely because of the recent activities in this area of Galarza. He wanted the data for an expose. I wanted them in order to calculate vital statistics rates. But it makes no difference -- he forced the Farm Placement Service to lay down a policy which applies to everybody. He did not accomplish the reform he sought. And in the process, he made it impossible for me to accomplish the reforms I seek.

Much more of this sort of thing and I am going to be without a project. I don't give a damn from a bread-and-butter standpoint. I can always work for the School of Public Health, doing

research on other projects. It's a slice of suffering humanity which is going to be the loser, if I may sound even more pompous than is my usual custom.

Therefore, I am going to have to lay down certain safeguards for my approach as you prosecute your approach. I hope these admonitions do not arrive too late.

(1) I don't want Robin doing any of the investigating in this case. As his "boss", I am responsible for his actions in anything having to do with the project, directly or indirectly, and if his rôle were called into question, it would be the calling into question of my rôle, that of my superiors, and all the way up the line.

(2) As far as your own activities are concerned -- well, I suppose you are in a little different position, not being technically associated with the project. But this can get awfully sticky. It would be awfully hard to maintain, in court or out, that you have not had a close and continuous relationship with the project, and that you capitalized on this relationship in pressing the present case.

(3) Which brings up the most fundamental problem of them all. Whatever becomes of this case -- whether it comes to a formal suit, is settled out of court, or whatever -- people are going to ask one question: where did you get your information? They have every right to ask this question. They would be stupid if they did not. The answer is clear, and devastating to the project. The information came from an interview conducted within the confines of a labor camp, said interview having been conducted with the knowledge and permission of the camp management, said permission having been given only upon the assurances of the interviewer (and his superior) that the findings would be kept confidential. Nothing could be plainer than this. I cannot break my word and will not. If I found Adolf Hitler hiding out in that bracero camp, I would keep my mouth shut. Here is the only way out that I see: you tell the lawyer who has volunteered his services, to look, first of all, for some sort of evidence that information concerning this bracero's death was in the public domain. Surely there must have been some kind of note in the Azusa paper, or some other paper in the area -- or in the paper of Tepic, Nayarit, which was this bracero's home town. If evidence can be found that the death was known, or potentially knowable, to any interested person, then I suppose we are all right, or at least in a little more comfortable position. Otherwise, you see, your lawyer has only two alternatives: he can name my project as the source of the information which initiated the proceeding, which spells finis for the project. Or, he can hide behind "protecting my sources of information," which makes his evidence hearsay and means the case will be thrown out, and for all I know may even expose him to contempt of court.

I trust you will go ahead with the utmost in caution and maturity, and allow your head a little more sway over your heart than it seems to have enjoyed so far. As I have said repeatedly: before I am through I am going to see that a lot of wrongs are righted. But I feel it is very unwise to win a battle and lose the war. Good luck to you, sweeter, and God bless us all.